

## BIOGRAPHICAL SUMMARY: Donald Rickard

*"We all worked together [during the 1946 sugar strike] and everybody helped one another. We had gardens, we had soup kitchen. So we had assignments. We had guys go do fishing, catch all the fish, bring 'em to the soup kitchen. Volunteers go up Kula to get vegetables from the Kula farmers who gave us, the strikers, free, no charge. . . . We had a lot of help from the community, outside of the sugar workers, private business, small business. They helped the sugar workers a lot. Especially the farmers, as I say, Kula farmers gave a lot of vegetables and stuff to help the soup kitchen run the strike. And that's how we ate, through the soup kitchen. Everybody go to the soup kitchen, have their meal. Yeah, was good."*

Donald Rickard was born in 1924 in Honolulu. At the age of six or seven, he moved to West Maui with his parents, Benjamin Rickard, Jr. and Rose McKeague Rickard. Benjamin worked as a mechanic for Pioneer Mill Company, while Rose cared for the growing family.

Donald and his family lived in various camps on the plantation, primarily Kuhua and Kelawea camps. He attended King Kamehameha III School and Lahainaluna High School up through tenth grade before dropping out to work. In 1940, he began his work career at Pioneer Mill Company, first as a field worker, then *luna* for a *hō hana* gang, ticket *luna* with the harvesting crew, crane operator, and, in 1963, a boiler in the power plant.

In 1973, he became a full-time business agent for his union, the International Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union (ILWU). Ten years later, he returned to his position as a boiler. Rickard retired from Pioneer Mill Company in 1987.

Rickard's present home, which he purchased from the plantation in 1955, is located in the old Kelawea Camp. He lives there with his wife, Frances Neizman Rickard, whom he married in 1952. The couple raised three children and has six grandchildren.

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ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW

with

Donald Rickard (DR)

Lahaina, Maui

January 30, 2003

BY: Warren Nishimoto (WN)

WN: This is an interview with Donald Rickard for the Pioneer Mill oral history project. We're at his home in Lahaina, Maui on January 30th, 2003. The interviewer is Warren Nishimoto. Also present at the interview is Frances Rickard, Donald Rickard's wife.

Okay, first question, Donald, when and where were you born?

DR: I was born in Honolulu, 1924.

WN: What were your parents doing in Honolulu?

DR: Well, as far as the history of my parents, what they were doing in Honolulu before coming to Maui, I'm not too familiar with that. Because when I came to Maui I was between six and seven years old and I was too young. But I know my mother was living in Kapahulu, Winam Avenue. And my dad, he was in the [military] service, I think, at that time.

WN: Tell me about your dad [Benjamin Rickard, Jr.]. What did he do? Where is he from?

DR: Actually, he's from Maui and the family lives right down here (on Lahainaluna Road and Kale Street). And if you want to know his work history, he worked at Pioneer Mill [Company] also. He was a mechanic, auto mechanic. He was working in the garage.

WN: For the mill?

DR: For Pioneer Mill Company. And he was also in the National Guard at that time. And during the war he served with the volunteers, Second World War. You see, he died when he was forty-(eight) years old. So I don't know too much of that.

WN: Do you know what year that was?

DR: Well it was (February 21, 1949). He's buried down (at the Maria Lanakila) Catholic church cemetery. And my mother lived till she was, what, (eighty-two). She died (September 4, 1986).

WN: What nationality was your father?

DR: Well, he was Portuguese-Hawaiian. But more Portuguese. And I don't know, the family says that we have a little French.

WN: So Rickard is a French name?

DR: Well, that's what they claim. It's a French name. And for your information, when we went to France, we saw that name on the bus, on the big bus. "Look our name on that bus!" So could have been a French name.

WN: And then, what about your mother [Rose McKeague Rickard]? What nationality?

DR: My mother is Irish-Hawaiian. Her mother is a pure Hawaiian and her father is a pure Irishman. Her maiden name was McKeague. She was born in Honolulu. And she was more a homemaker. She worked a little at Baldwin Packers cannery during the peak season. But other than that, she was a homemaker because she brought up ten kids. And, well, she had a hard life because my dad died when he was forty-eight years old. So she had a hard life raising up ten kids. Unfortunately I was the oldest.

WN: Unfortunately?

DR: Unfortunately.

(Laughter)

DR: I was the oldest.

WN: Why do you say "unfortunately"?

DR: So I gotta go work. I gotta quit school.

WN: Ah, okay.

DR: You know, I was going school. Sophomore year, I gotta quit school. Then go to work. Help support the family.

WN: Before we get into that, tell me where did you folks live in Maui?

DR: Well, we lived various places in Lahaina, all of our lives in Lahaina. But various portions of the plantation camps. We were living down here (on Lahainaluna Road and Kale Street with my father's parents). And we finally lived on Lahainaluna Road, where my sister lives now.

WN: Is this Mill Camp?

DR: On Lahainaluna Road, this road going down, Lahainaluna Road, they call that. Right on the right side as you go down. Just before you turn to Kuhua Road, there's a credit union and then right above the credit union. It's my former home, my mother's home.

WN: So when you were growing up, what kind of job did your father have?

DR: As I say, he was a mechanic.

WN: Okay, that's right.

DR: Sugar plantation. At Pioneer Mill.

WN: So was he like a *luna* or. . . .

DR: No. He just was a mechanic. He was a good mechanic. That's about all he did, mechanic work. And nothing else that I know of.

WN: Tell me about the house that you grew up in, the Lahainaluna Road one.

DR: I never grew up in Lahainaluna Road house. I grew up more up (at Kuhua Camp, then up Kelaweia, before moving to Lahainaluna Road). This area up here when I was small.

WN: Oh, Kelaweia [Camp]?

DR: Yeah. When I started to work for the plantation, that's when we moved down (to 359 Lahainaluna Road).

WN: Oh okay.

DR: Down here, you know.

WN: I see.

DR: To a better home.

WN: Okay, so tell me about the Kelaweia house. What was it like?

DR: Well, it was a plain, old plantation-style home. It was comfortable but . . .

WN: How many bedrooms?

DR: We only had three bedrooms.

WN: For ten of you?

DR: Yeah, for ten of us. You can imagine.

(Laughter)

DR: Yeah. Well, my mother made it comfortable for ten of us. You didn't have the privacy like you like to have because maybe three kids in one room and four kids in one room. But it was comfortable. My mother took good care of us. My daddy took good care of us, feeding us. But feeding ten with plantation wages wasn't the easiest, you know.

WN: You folks each had beds?

DR: Yeah, we had beds. We had beds and we had some single beds. It was small, like a folding cot kind. Some guys sleep in the parlor. (Chuckles) Not everybody in the bedroom. So it was hard, but we had the necessities from the plantation, like water.

WN: You had running water?

DR: Yeah, running water. The toilet at that time was outside ("outhouse"). Not the flush toilet, no more the running water toilet before.

WN: Try describe that for me. What was that like?



DR: Well, it's made of a wooden piece that you sit on, like a toilet. It had a cut round hole. You know the portables they have? Something like that. It's not in the house, now. It's outside in the yard. There's underneath running water that runs through the whole camp.

WN: Was it a natural stream or . . .

DR: The company built that (pipes for running water) to take care of the toiletry. So in that area, that stream feeds all the toilets. And you *shi-shi*, or dumps, or whatever all inside there. (Laughs)

WN: Water flows down?

DR: Yeah, it goes right down (to a cesspool). And those days, not like now, you gotta hunt for toilet paper. You gotta use newspaper some days because you run short of toilet paper that you can find. But you don't have the real toilet paper we have today. It was uncomfortable.

WN: Newspaper.

DR: Newspaper, yeah.

WN: I talk to some people, they said they used the Sears catalog.

DR: Yeah, some of them use it. As long as it's paper, they use it. And they cut it up and put it [near] the toilet, all stacked up. Or like my mother used to have like a stand with a sharp rod, then she stick 'em all inside there.

WN: Oh, the paper.

DR: Yeah, like a holder.

WN: Oh, yeah.

(Laughter)

WN: And had how many seats?

DR: One seat.

WN: One seat?

DR: Oh yeah. Just one seat.

WN: That was just for your family?

DR: For your family, yeah. But some areas they have community-type of bathroom. Like single men who used to be in single quarters. They have community bathroom, everybody goes to the same bathroom. Shower and toilet, you know. So you just gotta wait your turn. But there's a door that locks and got about maybe three, four of 'em, line up toilets.

WN: I wonder, you know the [running water] that was underneath.

DR: Yeah.

WN: Was it like deep . . .

DR: Running water.

WN: Or was it on the surface?

DR: No, kind of deep, yeah.

WN: Oh, I see. So it was kind of sanitary.

DR: And then even like my grandma's place was a private-owned place over here [i.e., non-plantation]. They also had a toilet outside. But it was not a running-water type. It's a big hole.

WN: Oh.

DR: And later on they cover it up and move 'em to another place. (Also, lime is sprinkled every now and then in the toilet bowl.)

WN: Move the shack?

DR: Yeah.

(Laughter)

DR: Those old days, yeah. But plantation was even better. They had the running stream that continuous run, the water. You know, a little bit of water in the cement pipe, maybe about this big. But it's half pipe because you gotta—the pipe is like this and maybe the water is about half way of running water.

WN: This pipe is about one foot [in diameter]?

DR: Yeah, maybe about one foot. And the running water continues running down while you dropping your things inside there. (Laughs) Going down.

WN: So even the paper you put inside?

DR: Yeah, everything goes down there.

WN: I wonder where it ended up though.

DR: I understand, they have a disposal area [i.e., cesspool] that when the thing fills up, then they get maybe a truck. I don't know how they do it, but I think suck it out, or take it out, and take it somewhere else and dump it or bury it. I don't know. But they have like a station that pick up all this from the whole camp. And you can imagine, some of the camps are big camps. Like Pu'ukoli'i, have big camps. And they all have that, too. So as I say, hard living but they provided. Plantation provided.

WN: What else did the plantation provide in the early days?

DR: Well, as I told you, they provided electricity, they provided water, they provided kerosene for your stoves. Those days, all kerosene stoves. So, only the rent, we pay a small, minimal rent. Very small. Maybe some guys pay seven dollars, some guys pay about, depend on the family,

how big the family, maybe pay up to about thirteen dollars a month. So the living was kind of hard, but you had the necessities.

WN: So you have toilet. What about bath?

DR: Oh, bath you have, too. Yeah, you get bath, shower.

WN: Oh, you had shower?

DR: Yeah, get shower. The bath, you go into the shower and you go outside to the washroom. You see, each house has a washroom.

WN: Was it separate from the house?

DR: Well, not separate. Attached to the house but you walk out into the bathroom. Like maybe my bathhouse over here.

WN: Oh, okay.

DR: You go out from the house right into it. And then the shower is there. And washing and everything is done in that particular room.

WN: The toilet is just. . . .

DR: The toilet is outside of the house. Not attached to the house. Maybe you gotta walk, oh from here, all depends, from here maybe to my car or somewhere around there.

WN: Think about twenty feet?

DR: Yeah, maybe about twenty feet. It depends. Some places are a little closer. I guess depend on how the water line goes. So the toilet gotta be just about on that line.

(Laughter)

WN: That's right. You can't choose where you want it.

DR: Yeah, you cannot choose. So some guys near, some guys a little farther than some. But those were the conditions.

WN: What about the kitchen?

DR: The kitchen was all right. We had the necessities of a kitchen, but you gotta buy your own icebox and stuff. But if you go back to the real early days, icebox was block ice that you put in your icebox. On the top of the icebox there's a compartment that you put your block ice inside. You cover it and then underneath is where you put your food.

WN: Where do you guys get the ice?

DR: Ice house [i.e., Lahaina Ice Company] down here. Down on Front Street, you know where—how can I describe that right now? Oh, where the library is.

WN: Oh, okay.

DR: You know the library?

WN: Yeah.

DR: That area on this side, the ocean side, the big ice house used to be over there. Plantation ice house.

WN: So what, you go pick it up or they deliver?

DR: They deliver. I mean, there's a certain point that you gotta acknowledge that the plantation provided the necessities of life. Because I guess they want their workers to be pretty healthy so the workers can do work. And they provided free medical. You don't have to pay a cent, those days. Everything was free practically. Only the house, I said, the rent. Everything else was free.

WN: What about food? What kind of food did you eat?

DR: Well the food, as I say, you gotta go to the company store. Pioneer Mill store [i.e., Lahaina Store] was down here. Used to be in the Takeuchi [Building], yeah?

WN: Oh, the building is still there?

DR: Yeah. It's a concrete building, real big building. In fact, that's the only concrete building on Front Street. Anyway that was the store that all plantation workers would go to. But there were some family stores, small family stores, around the area on Front Street. But your main source of food and stuff was the plantation store. And you could charge it. And in fact, those days, one of the employees from the store would go around from camp to camp and take orders. You know, come to your house. And if heavy, big stuff, they delivered the goods to you. So, I mean, it was hard, but the necessities was there.

WN: Yeah, you told me that the [store] manager would sometimes look at the list.

DR: Yeah, right. When I was in grammar school my mother would send me, "Go to the store." I gotta take a list. She tell me what she like. Then I go to the salesman, the—what do you call them now?

WN: Cashier?

DR: The cashier. Well, not cashier. Anyway he was like a salesman. But he said, "You gotta go to the manager." The manager of the store stayed in one little area, and I gotta go to him and he looks at the list. If it's okay, then he signs his initials. If it's not okay, he cross something out. Then he give it back to me and I go back and give the clerk over there what I want. (Chuckles)

WN: So what happened when you came home with not everything that your mother wanted?

DR: I gotta tell my mother—the manager was Mr. [C.W.] Brooks—"Mr. Brooks said that we don't need this now." Oh, my mother get mad.

She say, "Well I need it. We need it." But can't.

(Laughter)

WN: Funny, in those days, they actually had some boss that can tell you . . .

DR: Yeah. I mean, those days, you never had the complete freedom like today, you know. Today, you can do what you want and say what you want. But those days you gotta follow the rules. So it was a hard, hard life if you looking at the good things in life compared to now. It was a hard life at that time.

WN: So what kinds of things did you folks have at home, like raise at home, like gardens and things like that?

DR: We raised our own chickens and rabbits and vegetable garden, like onions and lettuce. Those days, you can grow anything without worrying about the insects like you have today. Everything grow. We don't have to put fertilizer, only chicken manure we used to put for fertilizer. We mix 'em up in the dirt and then we plant. Chicken manure, we don't go buy fertilizer like how you gotta buy now. And you don't have to spray all your vegetables with insecticide.

WN: Everybody had garden?

DR: Oh, practically everybody had some sort of a garden. Not a big garden but something to provide for their use. And, yeah, I think everybody had.

WN: So your chickens were for meat, I mean, eggs?

DR: Eggs, yeah. We used to have a chicken coop. Then we raised the chicken for the eggs. I used to pick up the eggs in the morning. And we used to kill chicken every now and then. You know, cook chicken for the family. And rabbit, too. Oh, we used to eat a lot of rabbits, too. Rabbit good eat, you know. (Chuckles) Oh, rabbit is clean, the meat is clean. Tender, too. We used to eat a lot of rabbits. And we used to keep a lot of rabbits. But those were the necessities in the home, to keep. You know, you have to keep those things, garden and animals.

WN: What kind food you folks ate? Portuguese food?

DR: No, we ate anything local, I would say. My mother cooked whatever in a big pot, mostly stew, stuff like that. Lot of stew. When you eat something special like steak or whatever, it was very seldom. Maybe a big birthday or something, you get something special. But other than that, it's corned beef stew or stew meat or something like that. (Chuckles)

WN: And plenty vegetables.

DR: Plenty vegetables, yeah. Plenty carrots and potato and stuff like that. We used to grow potato, too. Carrots, too.

WN: Regular Irish potato?

DR: Yeah, Irish potato. And sweet potato. In the [sugar] fields, the irrigators used to plant a lot of potatoes. We used to bring home lot of sweet potatoes from the field without the irrigator knowing.

(Laughter)

DR: But you know, the good thing about those days, as I told you, everybody is concerned about everybody. And everybody shared what they had. You know your neighbor, they shared. If they get good harvest or vegetables, they come bring them to your house, some onions or some lettuce or whatever. Those days everybody shared. And you not afraid of your neighbor

because you know your neighbor is your friend. And those days, you know almost everybody in the camp.

WN: So what nationalities lived in the camp?

DR: Mixture. We get all kind. We had Filipinos, Japanese, mostly Japanese in these camps over here. We used to have what they call single men's quarters. You know, lot of them [Filipino bachelors] were . . .

WN: Keawe Camp?

DR: No, no. Over here. Kuhua Camp by the mill, that side. Used to get single men's quarters. Big single men's quarters over here. I used to go shine shoes over there. I remember. Yeah, all these guys. Ten cents.

WN: How old were you?

DR: Oh, maybe about ten, eleven years old. About there. I used to shine shoes. Every weekend I used to go shine [shoes for] the Filipinos. They like me, yeah. "Come on down, come on down." So I got there, ten cents. Black-and-white shoes, fifteen cents. (Laughs)

WN: You had your own shoe box?

DR: Yeah, my own shoe box, and polish I buy from the store. I get little bit money so I can buy, you know, every time they pay me. So, I used to make a little extra spending money to go to the movie and stuff like that.

WN: Ten cents for a shine?

DR: Yeah. For the black shoe or brown shoe.

(Laughter)

DR: Yeah, fifteen cents for black-and-white shoes, or brown-and-white shoes, two-color shoes.

WN: Was only the Filipino bachelors that you shined for?

DR: Well, that's my best customers at that time. Because lot of single men from the single men's quarters, they like go out dance. All Filipinos, they used to like to go dancing, and all *da kine*, you know, celebrations. And they chic. They dress up. And they like polish the shoes, too. So I get couple of customers over there almost every weekend.

WN: Oh, you the only guy, or did other . . .

DR: When we were living down here, I was the only guy that was shining shoes. So everybody, even the other Japanese if they want to shine their shoes, they call me. They know I shine shoes. So they call me. So that's my job when I was about ten years old. (Chuckles)

WN: You did spit shine?

DR: Yeah. Oh, nice. I used to sprinkle the water, but I no spit on top. I just sprinkle the water.

(Laughter)

DR: Go at it. I can remember those days.

WN: It's a good way to make money, actually, yeah?

DR: Yeah. Eh, shoe shine was good those days, you know. I made small money, but you get money all the time.

WN: So what did you do to have good fun as a kid growing up?

DR: Well, we used to play with friends and we used to play cowboy. Like when I was living up here (at my grandparents' home), maybe about eight, nine, or seven years old. Seven, eight, nine maybe. Living up here, we used to play cowboys in the cane field bushes. We got the *koa* stick, *koa* branch. Clean 'em up. See, that's our horse. Put a string on the top, that's the bridle, "Come on, come on."

(Laughter)

DR: Shoot, "Bang! Bang!" Buck Jones and Tim McCoy and Hoot Gibson. All those guys. "Bhew, bhew, bhew!"

(Laughter)

DR: But we don't get into mischief. With just the kids where we lived, we do that. And then we go skating, too.

WN: Skating?

DR: Yeah. We go skating, too.

WN: Roller skating?

DR: Yeah. I used to borrow my uncle's skates. My uncle used to live here. And we used to skate by the (Pioneer Mill Company) office over here. You know where the office is, you go downhill, go around the office. Couple of us we used to skate over there. We used to play hockey and roller skate. And oh, we used to play softball in the (Moir's) park over there. And lot of activities had. And we used to play touch football.

And right across from my house, my mother's house where my sister's living now, used to get a (Moir's) park over there where Maui Electric [Company] is now. Used to get a park and down below that used to have a ring, a wrestling ring. And every so often, all these Japanese sumo wrestlers used to come from all over Honolulu. Good wrestlers [like] Oki Shikina. All these guys, the old-timers, you know. All these Japanese sumo wrestlers. And later years, they used to come from Japan, too. It used to be a popular place for wrestling over here.

We used to go watch boxing, too. They used to get amateur boxers come over here. Used to use the same place, you know, boxing ring. I don't know you if you heard about Bobby Lee, we had Dado Marino, and all these guys. All the boxers used to come over here and box.

WN: Now where was this? Where was the ring?

DR: Hard to describe because it's all changed already. Where Maui Electric is, right over here. That area used to be a big park. Even Lahainaluna [School] used to come here and practice down here when we were kids. Lahainaluna football team used to practice over there.



And we used to play in the park. And December 7, 1941 when the war started, we were playing early in the morning in the park. Me and my friends the Gonsalves family, Wallace Gonsalves, Alexander Gonsalves, and Johnny Gonsalves. Their family was our neighbor. We were staying right up where the credit union is now. They were staying right over there.

December 7th we were playing in the park. All of a sudden, this *Haole* guy, I guess he's a bookkeeper or something that checks the books at Pioneer Mill every so often. It so happens he was there Sunday. I don't know for what reason. He ran down by one of the houses over there. And at that time we weren't staying down there. We were staying up (at Kelaweia), see. But I always came down and played with the Gonsalves's. But anyway, that house that he ran to was Asing—Mr. Asing, I remember now. He was the manager for the warehouse. And that house was more like a supervisor's house, where my family moved later on (and where my sister lives now). But anyway, this guy ran to the house, knocking on the door and screaming "Pearl Harbor has been attacked by Japanese planes! By Japanese planes!" He came out, he was running on the street. "Japan attack Pearl Harbor." You know, this guy's screaming. He went *lōlō*. Screaming, up and down. So that's how we knew, December 7. Early in the morning we were playing touch football. (Chuckles)

WN: Wow, you were up that early? (Laughs)

DR: Oh yeah, we get up early. On Sunday morning we don't go church.

(Laughter)

DR: Play football.

(Laughter)

DR: Yeah, I don't forget that day, though. Sunday morning, December 7.

WN: What about chores? What did you have to do around the house?

DR: Well, around the house, I usually take care of the yard. Water the yard and stuff like that. Boil the water. Those days when we were staying (at Kelaweia) up there, oh, down here (Lahainaluna Road), too, we used to boil the hot water in a big drum to take a bath. We no more hot water. Only cold water, the shower. Up here we had an outside shower but not hot water. It just was cold water. (But, later, at the Lahainaluna Road address we had hot water through an oil-burner system.)

WN: Yeah. So what you folks do?

DR: So we gotta use the hot water. But the good thing about when we were staying up (at Kelaweia), we had a shower outside and we had a bathtub in the house, regular bathtub. So we used to take that water, pour 'em in the bathtub. If you like hot water, you gotta use the bathtub. If you like cold water, you go outside in the shower.

WN: So how did you make the water hot? With firewood or. . . ?

DR: All firewood, *kiawe* wood. Yeah, was hard, hard life.

WN: What about washing clothes? How did your mother wash clothes?

DR: They used to boil the water and put the clothes inside there. And take it out and wash it. My mother used to do that. Pound 'em on the (washboard).

WN: You pound 'em with the stick?

DR: Yeah, with the stick. (Chuckles)

WN: You had soap, too, though?

DR: Yeah, yeah, get soap. They managed somehow to be able to do what they needed to do. Like washing.

WN: What kind of holidays you folks celebrated?

DR: Holidays, those days when we were small, only maybe Christmas, New Year's. Labor Day came later on. We never celebrate Labor Day when we were kids.

WN: Did the plantation have something Christmastime?

DR: Oh, later on when I was kind of grown up. I would say, plantation had Labor Day picnic.

WN: Oh, they had picnic?

DR: Yeah, Labor Day picnic. Right, right, right.

WN: Plantation had?

DR: Plantation had a Labor Day picnic. All the plantation kids go on the truck and they [plantation] used to take 'em down Kā'anapali. And they used to get all kind of games and refreshments and stuff like that, all provided by the plantation those days. Yeah, we used to have Labor Day, right, right. But all under the plantation's conditions you celebrated Labor Day.

(Laughter)

DR: Yeah, yeah. It was celebrated. Yeah, that's true. I don't think it was a recognized holiday. Just the plantation made it as a Labor Day for the laborers go out and enjoy themselves for one day.

For [Maui] County Fair, the plantation used to provide trucks, too. Going to the county fair in Kahului. We used to catch the truck right down by the mill. My mother used to give us two dollars to go and then we get everything else free over there. Only two dollars for eat food and stuff like that. (Chuckles)

WN: What about movies? Where did you folks go movies?

DR: Movies, when we were kids, Pioneer Theater down where the banyan tree is. You know where the banyan tree [on Front Street] is?

WN: Yeah.

DR: Right over there, now they get a lot of shops over there. Used to be a theater over there. We used to go that theater. Matinees, we used to go. I think I told you that I used to play good

with my sister. My grandma was taking care of my sister next to me. She was living with my grandma down here (Lahainaluna Road and Kale Street), and we used to meet over here by the tennis court and I used to ask her, "You guys going to the matinee today?" I mean, tomorrow, or whatever day, Sunday.

She say, "Yeah, why?"

I told her, "I like go, too. Do you think Grandma can take me?"

(Laughter)

DR: She say, "Okay, I go ask Grandma." So she run down, she go to the grandma.

"You know, Donald like to go with us matinee Sunday."

So she run back up by the tennis court and tell me, "Yeah, Grandma say okay, Sunday."

(Laughter)

WN: What kind of movies had?

DR: Well, usually matinees was plenty cowboys. You know Buck Jones, and Tim McCoy, and Ken Maynard, and Tom Mix, and all those guys. You know the old cowboy movies? (Chuckles)

WN: That's *da kine*, serial kind, huh?

DR: Yeah. Some of them are serial but mostly cowboy movies. Sometimes we get *Tarzan*, and Johnny Weissmuller being Tarzan. And Buster Crabbe being Tarzan. Some of the old movies, Clark Gable and Norma Shearer, and all those actors and actresses. So yeah, we had a lot of activities. We never get into mischief. We found things to do to get out of mischief. We're young, but we try to associate with the kids that like to play, play games, or go to the movie.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Okay, tell me about [King] Kam[ehameha] III School. What was that like?

DR: It was a two-story building, and oh, it was one of the best buildings in Lahaina, I would say. And they had one building, and then later on they built another building on the side of the school. The cafeteria was by the school, down below. But on the side, now the bungalow, we used to call it the bungalow.

WN: Bungalow?

DR: The bungalow. Yeah, where the class used to hold fifth, sixth grade. And seventh and eighth was upstairs. Kindergarten, first grade, second grade, third grade was on the left, I think. And on this side was fourth, fifth, I think. Something like that. Down below was U-shaped. The principal's office was there. The library was down on the first floor. And you can go right through the whole building, right down to the beach. And on the left was the principal's office. And the right was the library, downstairs. And around the library were some classrooms. I think was fourth, fifth or something like that.

WN: Did you like school?

DR: Yeah. I liked school. Yeah, really I had good grades in school. (Laughs)

WN: How were your teachers?

DR: My teachers were good. I liked my teachers. Well, those days, I can remember some of the teachers, Miss Meinecke—no, Moir was, I never had. She was there.

WN: [Gertrude] Moir? So wife of the [plantation] manager?

DR: The manager, yeah. Mrs. Moir. She was one of the teachers. But Miss Kuluakini was my third-grade teacher, I think. I liked Mr. Mo'okini, Samuel Mo'okini. He was my seventh-grade teacher. Boy, he was a good math teacher. He can do all *kine* math tricks. He used to also direct our band. I used to play in the band, too.

WN: Oh yeah? What did you play?

DR: I played the cornet. I was the lead cornet player. (Laughs) And then Mr. Mo'okini, I liked him. He was our band instructor and he used to sing, teach us some songs, and we used to play. And across the street, where the old service station—you know Robinson's service station? That's where the band room was, right across the street. Oh, a lot of changes now. Now, over there is more like a parking lot. Fire station, yeah. Weimer was the principal when I was there. Mr. [C.E.] Weimer. Yeah. He was the principal when I was going to school. Those days when we were in seventh, eighth grade we used to not stay in one classroom. We used to go to about three different teachers, depending on the subjects. Mo'okini was more math. Science we used to go to Kuluakini, Miss Kuluakini. And Miss Emma Jean Farden, she used to teach us history and stuff like that.

WN: Your teachers were mostly Hawaiian?

DR: No, no. Well, like Kuluakini was Hawaiian and Farden was from the famous Farden family. And Emma Sharpe, you know Emma Sharpe? She was my teacher, too. (She also is from the Farden family.) Third, fourth grade I think. Fourth grade, yeah. Meinecke was Japanese. Yeah, she was Japanese, married to Meinecke. And who else? And Mrs. Beatrice Okihiro. She was a teacher. Yeah, I used to go to her class, too. About fifth grade I think.

WN: Mostly local, then, not too many from the Mainland.

DR: Yeah. All local, in fact. Mostly all live here. Not import. They were here already. And Mrs. Brooks, that's the [store] manager's wife. The store manager, the one I told you about, [C.W.] Brooks, plantation store. The wife was teaching over there, too, in the fifth grade. And Mr. Hirashima, he was my teacher. He was a strict teacher, sixth-grade teacher he was. Boy, that guy, I tell you. You know, I would say, kids today are spoiled. Not like our days. Our days discipline was like this, I think. (Hits desk.) Today, teachers no get control of the kids because the parents interfere. Hirashima used to always go to the next classroom. Every time like recess or a break, when we have a break. Or he'd give us one subject or thing to do in the class and then he'd leave us, and he'd say, "I'll check with you guys later." But he was a strict guy because when he'd leave, all the guys in the classroom, they play up.

(Laughter)

They go on the blackboard write all kind of things and everybody teasing and all that. One of my friends, Japanese boy, see Mr. Hirashima just came in the door, everybody saw him. But that guy he's writing yet. He don't know what we doing. But all of a sudden quiet, yeah. Mr.

Hirashima just watching. And over (at the blackboard by the doorway), they keep some erasers, see. Mr. Hirashima grab the eraser, whoa! (Hit the boy on the head.)

(Laughter)

DR: He go like this (holding his head with both hands). He run to his seat.

END OF SIDE ONE

SIDE TWO

WN: What was your favorite subject? What did you like?

DR: I used to like math. I was good in math and I liked geography, too. I liked the study of different countries and history. I hate English, though. Oh, I never did like English. Never did like it. But history, math, geography, history, I like those subjects. Even science, too. Math was my best subject. And geography and history. I like those subjects. I had good grades in those subjects, too. But as I say, I went high school one year, then about a year and a half. Sophomore year, I gotta quit school.

WN: So that was from Kam III, you went to Lahainaluna [School].

DR: Lahainaluna, yeah.

WN: So how many years did you go Lahainaluna?

DR: Oh, about year and a half. Not even . . .

WN: Ninth, tenth?

DR: Yeah. Ninth, tenth.

WN: So you went ninth, tenth. And so tenth . . .

DR: And I quit.

WN: . . . you had to quit?

DR: Yeah.

WN: How come you quit?

DR: As I say, gotta go work, help the family.

WN: Was it your decision or your parents'?

DR: My decision. Oh, my mother asked me, too, yeah. When she ask me, I not going say no. Pretty hard, yeah. [My dad] made it a hard life for my mother. So my mother really struggled. I felt sorry for her, too. I could have left the family at that time if I felt like doing it, but I didn't. I could have had all the opportunities. My aunty in Honolulu was telling me to come over. But I didn't go. And I had opportunities to run away from home and go to Kwajalein. My cousin's

husband was working there. He usually came from Kwajalein during the wartime. He used to come and then he used to recruit workers from Honolulu, take 'em down to Kwajalein to work. Defense work. And every time he used to tell me—I was about what, oh *shee*, maybe about nineteen, twenty years old at that time—he used to always tell me, “Eh, come on down. Come on, go with me. You can make plenty bucks down there.”

WN: This was after you were already on the plantation?

DR: Yeah. I was working already. I was the crane operator. Nineteen years old, I was the crane operator already.

WN: Okay, well let's get into that. So you quit school in the middle of tenth grade?

DR: Yeah.

WN: Yeah. How did you feel about that?

DR: Well, at that time I don't know, I never really thought that I should continue school or what. I just thought that maybe I should go help the family. I never had animosity toward my mother or father. I just thought that I have to go help somehow. I'm the oldest in the house so I went. It was hard. Till today I don't regret. The only thing I'm thankful for is I had the ability to go through that life and I can relay this to my kids. And I can say it's a challenge for me now. I want to give my kids what I didn't have. So I give my kids all the education they wanted. I gave them the education because I never got that. So I never deprived my kids of what they wanted. That, I can be thankful for. Maybe if I never go through this hardship, my thoughts may be different. Yeah, you gotta earn it. You want to go school, up to you. But I know I went through this life and I wanted my kids to better their life. I'm thankful for that. (Chuckles) And they bettered their life. All my kids are doing fine. So it was hard.

WN: What was your first job?

DR: I think I told you, I was a *lele kō*, we used to cut cane.

WN: Oh, *lele kō*?

DR: Yeah. Was just when I started.

WN: Your first then?

DR: Yeah, my first job on the plantation. But I never worked too long at that. Maybe a couple of months. Then I went to become a ticket *luna*, they call that.

WN: A what?

DR: Ticket *luna*.

WN: Ticket *luna*?

DR: Yeah. The reason why they call it “ticket *luna*” is, those days used to get cane cars. The cranes, they load the cane cars. And the train takes the cane cars to the mill. What I used to do, I used to put tickets on the car to know who loaded that car. You know, what gang loaded the car. So (number) seven crane or whatever, on the ticket get. And there's a hole on the draw bar



of the cane car. It's a big piece of log. And there's a hole right on the log that I stick the ticket in, before the car go out to the mill yard.

WN: The car was on tracks?

DR: Yeah, yeah. (But later, trucks were involved. Cranes loaded the trucks in the fields.)

WN: Okay. So back then had cranes already? They didn't do it by hand.

DR: Well, no. You see the cranes—I confusing the whole thing. The cranes load the truck, and the truck takes it down to the unloading station. I gave you the wrong impression. From the unloading station, the trucks load the cane into the cane car on the railroad track. And this is where I put the ticket in. I put the ticket in that particular car. Sometimes, because I catch a ride with the truck to go down to the station, I give it to the truck driver, the ticket, and tell 'em go put 'em in the car. Either way, it doesn't matter. And I'm in charge of the crew, the crew that works with the crane, and the crane operator, and all that.

WN: So wait. Explain one more time. They cut the cane, and from that point on what, they get a crane?

DR: No, no. The crane is the one that grabs the cane.

WN: Grabs up the cane?

DR: Yeah, and the *lele kō* is the one—we call that "*lele kō*"—is the one that follows the crane.

WN: Okay.

DR: Follow the grabber. You see, the crane grabs, loads the truck, and then moves ahead. When he moves ahead, there's leftover cane behind, right? It [the crane] can't grab every stick of cane. So there's couple of workers, maybe about four workers per crane, that follows and cuts what's left behind from the grabber. Yeah, and throw it ahead, throw it ahead, throw it ahead. So the grabber grab, throw it ahead; grabber grab, throw it ahead. As they go, they move with the crane.

WN: Ah, so you doing all that by hand?

DR: Yeah. She [i.e., DR's wife] was one of them, too.

WN: Okay.

DR: Yeah. All with cut-cane knife, cut 'em, throw it ahead. You go like this, right here the crane, like this yeah, coming up. It's grabbing like this.

WN: Grab the cane from where?

DR: Right on the ground over here. Because the grab is over there. And the crane is over here coming. So we close to danger all the time.

(Laughter)

DR: So you cut like this. Go, throw like that. All what the grab didn't pick up. You cut then you throw in the front.



WN: I see. So . . .

DR: She used to work there, too. So they go after the operator who what they say does a *kāpulu* job. You know, means don't do a good job. They go after the crane operator.

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

WN: Yeah, talking about the crane. *Lele kō* you said.

DR: Yeah, that's my first job. When I was nineteen years old, I used to drive the crane.

WN: You started driving crane at nineteen?

DR: Nineteen years old.

WN: What was your *bangō* number?

DR: Forty-nine, forty-one. (Chuckles)

WN: Forty-nine, forty-one. Everybody remembers that.

DR: Oh, yeah. Plenty of guys, they know that.

WN: Oh, yeah?

DR: Yeah, you no can forget.

WN: Forty-nine, forty-one.

DR: Yeah, forty-nine, forty-one. I never forget that number. Yeah, I know Japanese number used to be all in the twenties. Twenty-seven, twenty-six, or whatever. Caucasians, like us, we all in the forties. And the Filipinos used to be in the. . . . How about Filipinos? Fifties or? Something like that. Well, anyway, so what else now?

WN: Okay, so you were ticket *luna*, yeah?

DR: I was ticket *luna*.

WN: Ticket *luna*. And then what else? Before you drove crane, what else did you do?

DR: Well, as I said, before I drove crane, I was cutting cane, like *lilikō*. You know, following the crane and stuff like that. And then I became a crane operator.

WN: So before you became crane operator, do you remember how much you made?

DR: Before I came crane operator, *shee*, I can't remember. Because I get confused with the union rate and before the union rate, that's why. It was small pay, though. Maybe two dollars, seven cents [\$2.07] a day, or something like that. I'm not sure.

WN: And your paycheck went to your mother?

DR: Oh, yeah. My mother took the whole paycheck and maybe give me couple—five dollars maybe or something like that. Maybe two dollars, five dollars, whatever she can afford because she gotta think about paying her bills first. (Chuckles)

But as far as earning money, was not too hard to get a job. But the kind of money they pay you was very small at that time. If you no scared work, you can get money, you can work. Everybody was employed. No more unemployed people. Everybody was working those days. The only homeless guy was Makekau. Remember the guy, Makekau? That's the only homeless guy that I can recall. Only one guy, with his old jacket, old pants that he'd been wearing for the last six months without washing. And we call him "Makekau." We used to call him as a nickname. That's the only guy we see homeless. Plantation days, everybody's working. Small pay but . . .

WN: How did you learn how to drive crane?

DR: As I said, I used to befriend this guy, "Cue-ball" DeGarma.

WN: "Cue-ball?"

DR: We used to call him "Cue-ball." He was . . .

WN: Bald?

DR: He was bald.

(Laughter)

DR: Completely bald. And he used to be a crane operator. DeGarma family. The two brothers are "Cue-ball" and Antone DeGarma, which is Cue-ball's brother. Antone had a son, Tony DeGarma. So the DeGarms were three operators, crane operators. And the Correias. All Portuguese, those days. DeGarms, the Correias, and I used to work with them. And lunch time or when get break, they used to let me go fool around with the crane. They used to show me how to do it. Those days all with levers, you know all manual work. Not like now, everything is hydraulic. That's how I learned how to drive crane. And then I got a job. The supervisor used to be [C.J.] Willett. Used to be a superintendent of harvesting. And he and I used to get along fine. He liked me, too. So, when he watch me go fooling around with the crane, "Hey, Don. You like that job? You like that job?"

I tell, "Oh, yeah. I like this job."

"Okay. Okay, I'll fix you up, I'll fix you up." You know those days the boss tell you, that's it. No more union to bother about before. (Chuckles) So that's how I got on crane, Mr. Willett.

WN: Must have been raise in pay, yeah?

DR: Oh, yeah. I think it was three dollars and thirty-six cents [\$3.36] a day. We didn't get hourly pay at that time yet. When the union came in, then we started getting hourly pay. Yeah, I think it was three thirty-six a day, crane operator. And that was good pay, those days, crane operator. One of the best paid in the plantation. Better than the mechanics, mechanics had about two seventy-eight [\$2.78] or something like that.

WN: So you were in with the harvesting department?

DR: Harvesting department, yeah. And because I was experienced being a ticket *luna*, then I went to crane operator. I told you in reverse, the opposite. From working for a while—as I told you, about six months—then I became a ticket *luna*. And then I became a crane operator. I was a crane operator, oh *shee*, how many years? Nineteen sixty-three, I think. Then I went to the boiler.

WN: Then you went to the boiler.

DR: Sixty-three, I think.

WN: You told me last time you started crane operator around '43.

DR: Yeah, about there.

WN: Sixty-three, you went to the boiler.

DR: Yeah, '63.

WN: Twenty years then.

DR: Yeah, about twenty years, I was crane operator.

WN: Oh, wow.

DR: Yeah, long time, I was.

WN: Do you remember the '46 strike at all?

DR: Oh, yeah. I participated in the strike. Yeah, oh, the big strike we had. A long strike. All the sugar plantations stayed out seventy-nine days. But we stayed out a little more than the rest of the sugar industry. Pioneer Mill, stayed out the longest. We stayed about [123] days. I forget how many days. But close to [123] days. Well, because we had some problems with the plantation handling the go-back-to-work agreement. And then we found out some supervisors were irrigating canes and then we had a big, big fight. A couple of guys *wen* bust up one supervisor. (Chuckles) So that *wen* cause more delay in the agreement. But there were other things that was not agreeable because we were supposed to have a master contract, you know, all the same. But they were giving HC&S [Hawaiian Commercial & Sugar Company] more than Pioneer Mill. You know HC&S, the workers were getting a little bit more.

WN: Yeah. Because of the, I mean, even after the . . .

DR: Yeah, yeah. When the settlement came. But we never go back because they still didn't agree for us to get the same like HC&S. So we stayed out longer. And some other incidental things that pertain to the contract. But we stayed out a little longer.

WN: How did you folks manage during that strike?

DR: Well, as I say, we all worked together and everybody helped one another. We had gardens, we had soup kitchen. So we had assignments. We had guys go do fishing, catch all the fish, bring 'em to the soup kitchen. Volunteers go up Kula to get vegetables from the Kula farmers who gave us, the strikers, free, no charge. So all those things came in handy. We had a lot of help from the community, outside of the sugar workers, private business, small business. They helped the sugar workers a lot. Especially the farmers, as I say, Kula farmers gave a lot of

vegetables and stuff to help the soup kitchen run the strike. And that's how we ate, through the soup kitchen. Everybody go to the soup kitchen, have their meal. Yeah, was good.

WN: I know you were a pretty young boy still yet that time.

DR: Yeah, oh yeah.

WN: Did you understand what union meant?

DR: Well, yeah, I kind of understand. I know what they were—well, I used to admire this guy, [Louis] “Lou” Goldblatt when he spoke. And I remember at Pioneer Theater, and when he spoke by the banyan tree. And he really made us realize that what he was saying was true. Like we were more or less like second-class citizens. We never had a lot of rights. And he said by organizing . . .

(Taping stops, then resumes.)

DR: So I was telling you what now? Oh, the soup kitchen, yeah?

WN: Yeah.

DR: Yeah, Goldblatt inspired me because, as he said, we not full citizens because we are just like second-class citizens. And when he said that, I thought, yeah, that's true, you know. Because we know what our rights are as Americans, although we were a [U.S.] territory at that time. But we still felt like we were Americans. But we never had the rights like the Americans on the Mainland because we were under the influence of the Big Five. The guy [Goldblatt] was one of the top orators at Stanford University, at that time. He was a labor leader, secretary[-treasurer] of the International [Longshoremen's and Warehousemen's Union, ILWU]. He inspired me to really get involved in the union. And he and I became good friends after I got started going. I went to his home in San Francisco and I met him and his wife. He's the one that really inspired me. Lou Goldblatt. And Jack Hall, too. Jack Hall was a leader in Hawai'i. And I don't know, you heard about Jack Hall I guess?

WN: Mm-hmm [yes].

DR: He was a leader in Hawai'i. And Harry Bridges was the overall leader, no question about it. But the inspiration I got was from Lou Goldblatt. Yeah, the drive.

WN: What kind of a man was he?

DR: He was an intelligent man, very intelligent. Good speaker too. Good speaker. He really can convince you. What he said make a lot of sense to me. If you hear him speak, you cannot but admire the way he presents himself. And a very humble person. Nice guy and easy to get along with. And I liked him. I never had a quarrel with him. In fact, I understand later on that this guy [Edward C.] “Eddie” DeMello told me that he [Goldblatt] was, more or less, when he saw my name as a delegate to go to the [ILWU] international convention, he was happy to see me there. And I think he saw me building up because of him. And he recommended me to go to overseas to be the delegate at the international convention.

WN: This was when you were business agent or before that?

DR: No, before that. He recommended me to go to Chile to be a delegate for the international, representing the union. Three of us went. So I admired the guy. I admired him and Tom Yagi

and Newton Miyagi, those are the guys that I really admired. They helped me along in the labor movement. They had trust in me and they had foreseen the ability that I had, and I'm so grateful for them.

WN: So when you saying that when Goldblatt talked about second-class citizens, you know that you folks' pay was low, and plantation provided for you folks like housing and things like that. At that time, was that something you really believed in?

DR: Well, not because of what the plantation provided for us. It was recognizing what he said [about being] second-class citizens is right because we couldn't vote for who we liked secretly. The plantation used to come around, the camp boss used to come around the housings, and tell us who to vote for. You know, plantation days. They used to tell, oh, Republican, you gotta vote for the Republican. As I told you, I think, if a Democrat gonna speak or want to talk to us, we gotta go sneak into somebody's house, or hide somewhere that not everybody can see. Only the group that he can trust come to see him and talk about it. Everything was strictly Republican those days, plantation days. And so I think that's what he really drove at, that we had no freedom to vote or choose who we wanted to vote for. And that's a freedom we lacked. That's the essence of what he meant in freedom, I think, not the conditions. The conditions, no question, the union was there later on to tell us what you can get, what you're entitled to. And maybe he meant that's part of being second-class because our wages were not comparable to some wages in the Mainland. But that drive made us organize and put ourselves together to see that we get better living standard.

WN: You know when you folks had to sneak to have meetings and things, was there a fear that you would get caught and maybe lose your jobs?

DR: Yeah, sure. There was a fear. Oh, yeah. Lot of fear. But you gotta give the guys, the pioneers that did that, like Kame Ichimura, Shigeshi Wakida, [Masato] "Mac" Yamauchi, the local. They were more or less the pioneers then because they were way before me that started the drive. And [Susumu] "Peanut" Sodetani was pretty active, too, those days. These were the guys that really were active and started the drive to organize the sugar workers in Pioneer Mill. So you gotta appreciate those guys. But again I say, personally, I cannot condemn the plantation alone, at fault. Sure, a lot of things they didn't give us, but a lot of things they gave us, too. They made living livable, although we didn't get the luxuries. But lot of places didn't get the luxuries at that time. Even the Mainland, lot of places never get the luxuries. Even in Honolulu. Plenty places you never get the luxuries.

But a lot of things they took away from us because I guess they wanted control of the workers. So we saw that and we wanted to do something about it, so we organized. And with the help of the Mainland organizers, we organized ourselves.

WN: How was it when you had to face your bosses [after the strike]? I mean, was that uncomfortable at all?

DR: No, it came to a point that, as far as I know, the secondary leadership of the plantation, or the bosses, supervisors—not the top I'm talking about—the guys that we see day to day, it was like they accepted it. Many of them, they accepted it, the fact that it's gonna come sooner or later kind of attitude. They accepted it so it wasn't so bad. The top guys, yeah, maybe, they never like that. But they never come out strongly, expressing their objection. So it helped the organizing. And no big pressure was put on the workers not to vote for the union or whatever. Although, the workers knew that there was some pressure, unseen pressure. But they took a



chance. But we never had no backlash for it. Nothing that we couldn't handle. When the union came, made a big change, I think.

WN: So from before '46 and after '46 you noticed a difference, big difference?

DR: Gradual change. Oh, yeah, sure. Not right away, but gradual change. You can see the difference.

WN: Like what kind of changes?

DR: Well, you get . . .

WN: The wages went higher.

DR: The wages go up. And you get no discrimination. Like before, they used to segregate the camps, different families and stuff like that. Filipinos, Japanese, Portuguese, or whatever, but now no more such thing. Since the union came, no discrimination, that was part of the clause in the contract, no racial discrimination. So that made it easier, too, for everybody. And then the good thing about it, too, you had improved conditions of work, improved conditions of living, with good wages, plus knowing that you had the rights like any other worker. You also have vacations, you have paid holidays, paid vacations, you have sick leave, you have dental plan, you have health plan, and all that. Well, at that time, plantation was providing the health plan until the 1950s. Then gradually went into more like a private plan, like Kaiser plan. Before was strictly a plantation plan provided by Pioneer Mill. So we had Kaiser plan. So everything improved along the way. And housing came about. Property first choice to the employees, all these sales of homes or land up here. Priority was given to the employees.

WN: Oh, even when the plantation was still operating?

DR: Yeah, oh yeah. Well, the union was instrumental in that, negotiating with the company and with the county. As I told you, [Mayor] Elmer Cravalho and later was [Mayor] Hannibal Tavares. We negotiated with the plantation and came out with agreements that set priorities. And we got all these homes all through the union's efforts. If it wasn't for the union, I don't know what, maybe private homes, but not for the ordinary guy. (Chuckles) For the rich guys.

WN: What they got, like low interest loans, and stuff like that?

DR: Oh yeah sure. And the homes were cheap at that time, early 1960s, about '63, '64, around there. They started building all these homes going up there. Increments. So they paid about eleven thousand, thirteen thousand, house and lot. What more can you have for plantation, eh? So a lot of guys moved out of the camp. Well, I guess the plantations felt they wanted to get rid of caring for the housing. So that's less cost for them. So after, everybody get out. So that was part of plantation movement because they felt less cost to them. So that's the reason we got it.

So I think you guys realize that Hawai'i is today what it is, I personally think, because of the efforts of organized labor. Not only ILWU, AFL [American Federation of Labor] or whatever. If those organizations didn't organize the workers in Hawai'i, I don't think we'd be at this stage. I think we'd be still under the control of the Big Five. And the Big Five would be multi-billionaires today because of the influx of people around the world coming over here. They'd be building, but all the benefit go to the Big Five. And here we'd be working under I don't know what kind scale of pay, but I hate to think about it. What would happen if organized

labor didn't come to Hawai'i? That's a great move Harry Bridges and Goldblatt did when they opened the gates for Hawai'i to join the ILWU from the West Coast, see. Longshoremen, eh?

WN: Longshoremen.

DR: Yeah, Longshoremen started it. So we owe a lot of gratitude to them [i.e., Bridges and Goldblatt] because they made the first move to come to Hawai'i, and took a chance. And we had a lot of influx of different people, lot of Filipinos from the Philippines came at that time, 1946. The plantation imported more Filipinos from the Philippines, and they were scared to lose their jobs. It was hard for them to think other than what the company think. You know, hard for them to say, "Okay, I like join the union," because they scared to lose their jobs because they just came. So, it was a big benefit, I think, to the whole population of Hawai'i when organized labor came into Hawai'i.

WN: What was the '58 strike like? How would you compare '46 with '58? You were probably much more involved.

DR: I think as far as hardship, I think '46 strike was harder because of the struggles. Fifty-eight strike the union was established already. So it wasn't a struggle like 1946. You only was striving to get more benefits, better benefits. Because already the recognition was there after '46 strike. So '58, I never see that much. Well, yeah, you gotta go soup kitchen while the strike is on, but the union provide all that.

WN: But more organized . . .

DR: Yeah. More organized and the people were more solid [in 1958]. They know what happened in the past, the benefits they had from the past. So you had more support, the union had more support. And in fact maybe 1958 I think we had lot of support from the outside, independent business people, the small business. I not talking about big business. The small business people. I guess they recognized what happened in '46 and what benefits they had because of '46 strike. You know, workers had more money, spend more money. So the small business were making more money. So they realized that. And I guess when '58 strike came, "Eh, we gotta support these guys. The more money they make, more money we can make, too." (Chuckles) So that makes sense, you know.

WN: You talking about like the stores, like Nagasaki [Store]?

DR: Yeah, yeah. You got Nagasaki and a lot of local stores (on Front Street).

WN: Oh, but that's right, though. They benefited.

DR: Oh, yeah sure.

WN: The workers had more cash.

DR: Sure, sure.

WN: Less charging?

DR: Less charging. True, yeah. So I think in general the '58 strike was beneficial to everybody, more than '46 strike. Only '46 strike, as I say, the struggle was there. But once they accomplished that, '58 was easier. Although strikes, no matter what form of strike, is not easy. You going lose wages. And I had two kids, raising two kids.



WN: Oh, that's another thing. Forty-six strike, you were what, just living with your parents?

DR: Yeah. I got married 1952, she and I.

WN: Oh, okay. How were you involved in the '58 strike? Were you at any kind of. . . .

DR: Yeah, I was unit treasurer at that time.

WN: Unit treasurer.

DR: Yeah, I was unit treasurer. I took care of all the money. (Chuckles) Had a garden over here (near my present home).

WN: Was that used for soup kitchen?

DR: Yeah, soup kitchen. All the gardeners used to come over here, we used to drink beer over here. (Chuckles) I was an officer at the time. They used to come over here, drink beer with me and everything, I tell, "Hey, go over there. Get that garden going."

(Laughter)

DR: But we had good relationship among the workers, so wasn't hard. Very good. So I enjoyed working with the workers of Pioneer Mill. And they gave me a lot of support. I have no regrets. I have no regrets with serving the membership. I wish I could have done more maybe, but that's it. (Chuckles) Later on, 1963, I became the unit chairman over here.

WN: That's the same year that you went to the boiler?

DR: Yeah. Just about there.

WN: But you had full-time job in the boiler, and then you were unit chairman for the . . .

DR: Yeah, I was responsible for the unit membership over here.

WN: Did you see each other [i.e., DR's wife] those days?

DR: Oh, yeah. (WN laughs.) That's a good question now. Because a lot of my old-time friends, they tell me, "Hey, what you doing now? Why not come with the senior citizens?" You know, the senior club.

I tell, "Hey *shee* I'm sorry. I like to but I promised myself that when I retired I going give myself to my family." I did all my work for the membership, the union. That's how all my hair fall off. I did all I could for them and then I figure when I retire, I gotta give my family the benefit of my time.

WN: Okay. So, tell me about the boiler. What was that like working?

DR: Well, the boiler was new.

WN: Was it inside the mill?

DR: Outside. Across the street (from the mill, on Lahainaluna Road).

WN: Oh, by the office?

DR: No, no, no. Down by the mill. By the mill but right across that building over there. That's what they call a boiler.

WN: Oh, okay.

DR: Yeah. Steam generation operation over there.

WN: What did you do?

DR: Well, I was the steam operation assistant, what they call assistant steam generation operator. And we used to run the power plants and run the boiler.

WN: How come you left crane operator?

DR: Well, the pay was better over there, a little better. And you don't have to get dirty like you get dirty in the field. And easy, convenient. My house is here, I used to have a little putt-putt, I used to go down the hill. (Chuckles) It was a little putt-putt. Go down to work, oh so simple.

WN: Old-time moped?

DR: Yeah, moped ride. We call that "putt-putt."

WN: Oh, you were married already by then. Where? Over here?

DR: Yeah.

WN: Oh, you lived in this house?

DR: Nineteen fifty-five, I moved here.

WN: Okay. So you were boiler. Now was that considered, not management though?

DR: No, no. We just ran the steam generation operation over there. The power plant generate steam to run the operation of the power plant and the mill. It generates oil and steam and the steam goes into the pipes, and goes to the [mill] side to run the whole operation of the [mill] and generate electricity to the power plant. And we'd sell some of the excess electricity to Maui Electric [Company]. So Maui Electric tie in with Pioneer Mill's power plant. So that was simple. Only thing, the hardest part of the job was the start-up time. Once the thing is running, simple, you know. Just go check, take the readings, and stuff like that. And that's about all. And check if everything is running okay. So was a good job. And as I say, only the start-up time is a lot of work, to start the whole thing. You shut down, see. Certain time you shut down because of holidays or whatever. Sometimes they shut-down. But most time it's running. You know, weekdays, weekends, all running. But when you shut down, you gotta start 'em up again, bring the power up again, that's a difficult time. You gotta get everything working right, temperatures, all the meters gotta be running right and all that. (Chuckles) But other than that it's great.

WN: They were using that boiler system kind of late, yeah?

DR: Oh yeah. That's why I say, about 1963, anyway the [19]60s, they started to build. Over there, took about a year and a half, I think. Before that had a power plant, but the generation of

steam was in the mill. In the mill, they generate the steam to run the power plant. But then they enlarged it to across the mill, and they modernized it. That was my last job before I became a business agent.

WN: Now how did you become business agent?

DR: About 1971, I was temporary assigned by Thomas Yagi. So they created a position. I was the first guy for that assignment position. Temporary position, but it wasn't elected position. The rest of the positions are all elected, but that was assigned by the division director, with the approval of the local. So I was assigned to be a temporary business agent to take care West Maui, especially the sugar, Pioneer Mill, and pineapple of Honolua. And the hotels were just starting to come up. So I had a big job. *Shee*, I took care all the sugar companies [on Maui], in fact. Oh, I had a big job.

WN: All the sugar . . .

DR: Yeah, HC&S, Wailuku Sugar [Company], Pioneer Mill, and West Maui hotels, too, I got. And then later on when Wailea grew up, I took care Wailea, too. I had a big assignment. I always grumble to Tom Yagi, "Hey, Tom. What you trying to do to me?" (Chuckles)

WN: And Foodland [Super Market, Ltd.], too, over here?

DR: No. Well, Foodland came later, in the [19]70s. When Foodland started, yeah, I was in charge of them, too. You know, Foodland was organized. But short period of time though.

WN: Where did you work? Where was your office, in Wailuku?

DR: I had my office down here, down by the plantation clubhouse. It's a church now. You know where the church is as you come up?

WN: Yeah.

DR: There's a church over there. Right in the back of that used to be the union office over there. My office used to be over there. Well, I gotta go report the other side every morning because I get Hāli'imaile to go to and all that.

WN: You go over there, too?

DR: I used to take all the pineapple [companies], all the sugar [companies], and they gave me some hotels, too. Yeah, I tell you I had the biggest responsibility . . .

END OF SIDE TWO

TAPE NO. 39-15-1-03; SIDE ONE

WN: So Tom Yagi was the . . .

DR: Division director.

WN: . . . division director for Maui?

DR: Mm-hmm [yes].

WN: I see. So you were temporary from '71, and then '73 . . .

DR: Ah, '73, I became a full-time business agent. I was elected. I ran and I got elected.

WN: Oh, I see.

DR: You gotta run to be a full-time. So I ran. Yeah, 1983, I (went back to the boiler).

WN: Seventy-three to '83?

DR: Yeah.

WN: Well, what did you like better? Being business agent or. . .

DR: Well, business agent was interesting. But lot of headaches, though, lot of work because working with people is the most difficult task. Because you gotta satisfy, and many of them are not satisfied. No matter what you do, you can't satisfy them. (Chuckles)

WN: That's true.

DR: I guess you know that. But that's difficult. But the good thing about it is, when you do something good for something or somebody, you really feel good about it. When the guy lose his job and you bring him back, that makes you feel good. And happened to me lot of time like that. Lot of guys lost their job, I brought 'em back. And they show a lot of appreciation for that, too. So it makes you feel real good.

WN: Now this is at a time when I'm sure Pioneer Mill and other plantations were sort of downsizing, yeah? Were they sort of . . .

DR: At that time, no.

WN: No. Was still . . .

DR: Oh, yeah. They were viable yet. All the sugar companies were strong at that time. Until, maybe early [19]80s. That's when the sugar [industry] started to go downhill. Then they started closing up sugar companies and all that. But at that time, from the [19]70s up to the [19]80s, oh boy, everything was strong. Kihei and Wailea was building up fast, too, hotels.

WN: At that time, did you have any indication that Pioneer Mill was not gonna be around?

DR: Not at that time when I was serving. But later on after the [19]80s, I foreseen that. I told a lot of my friends when JMB [Hawai'i] came into the picture, buying land or buying shares from Pioneer Mill, Amfac, I foreseen something. I told my friends, "Hey, we in trouble because these guys are land lovers. They not agriculturists, they land lovers. And their primary investment in this company is for the land, the beautiful landscape all around here. That's what it is." I said, "*Shee*, ten years from now I don't know what going happen. I hope I'm wrong but I think these guys' objective is to get the land or real estate. They from Chicago. What they going do with agriculture from Chicago? At that time, I think I told you, Japanese investors were making all the investments in Hawai'i. They were buying property and stuff. So these guys thought they were going make big money, JMB. So that's the reason why they bought.

But now JMB realizing the Japanese investment is not coming in. So they're kind of scared now. So they selling some portions to individuals now. Like [Peter] Martin, he bought that place Olowalu side (and Launiupoko). Big acreage over there. They selling, but they scared right now. They don't know what to do. So now what? They close up Pioneer Mill. And I foreseen that.

WN: How did you feel when the mill closed? Plantation closed . . .

DR: I felt lousy because lot of my friends I worked with are on verge of retirement. You know, they're maybe late fifties or early sixties. And what's going to happen to these guys? Whether they going get the full benefit or retirement, all those things come into play. I felt sorry for the guys that I knew and for the workers themselves.

WN: Lot of young guys got laid off, yeah?

DR: Yeah. Oh, yeah.

WN: Lost their jobs.

DR: But the young guys, they lost their job, but not too bad. To me, the young guys, they can look for some other job. But how about the old guys? The old guys who dedicated themselves for the plantation, maybe twenty-five or thirty years already. And they're at an age, they not going find a job equivalent to what they were doing. Pretty hard when they laid off. So they going work maybe janitorial job or dishwasher at the hotels, that's about all. So those were the guys I kind of felt sorry for. The young ones, I feel, they'll make a go somehow.

WN: The young ones found jobs at the hotel?

DR: Oh, yeah. Plenty of them working someplace. Many of them. But the older ones, some of them I guess forced to take early retirement.

WN: When I was interviewing people in Honoka'a, when the Honoka'a Sugar [Company] . . .

DR: Closing.

WN: . . . closed down. That was hard because there weren't hotels in that area. They had to drive all the way to Kona.

DR: Yeah. Over there harder.

WN: Here, they got the hotels.

DR: At least you get some jobs to go to, the young ones, I guess. Yeah, some of them were working two jobs. Not too bad, yeah.

WN: Couple more questions. What do you think the future of Lahaina is?

DR: Well, I always tell my wife and my friends, the future of Lahaina is not my time. I'll be gone by then. But this area over here, all around Maui, millionaires, multi-millionaires will be owning land over here. Their summer vacation or winter vacation will be over here, whichever they choose. The only jobs available will be working at the hotels or servicing the people living up here, the rich guys. Yardmen's job or construction work or whatever it is. That's

about all. Nothing for the local guys. You going be working for them. Nothing for the locals. So the local guys going be just struggling along.

WN: So you don't think this place is going to be a good place for the local guys to live?

DR: I don't think so. There's no future unless they talking about big technology operations in Hawai'i. You know how they talking about in Honolulu? If that is successful then maybe some local guys can go into that field. But other than that, only field of work going be janitorial work or service work. That's about all. That's the only two types of work. No agriculture, no nothing else. Just service to the millionaires and service to the hotels. No other work.

WN: Your talking about people buying all the lands over here, all the old cane lands?

DR: Well, yeah. Mostly I would say going begin up here because these lands going be all . . .

WN: It's all barren now, yeah?

DR: And it's beautiful land. I mean, the view and all that. That's what the *Haoles*, they like.

WN: So who owns the land now still?

DR: Amfac and some of them are private owners. But Amfac is the greater part. It's Amfac. Bishop Estate owns some places. But some other private owners, too. But not too much. Amfac owns the majority of the land.

But the point is, all this land gonna be privately-owned by rich millionaires. And local guys, born and raised here, their children understood, they cannot buy. But the point is, where are their children or grandchildren gonna be living? What's their future over here? There's no future over here. Education-wise, what you going do? Unless you can create some new industry over here. If the technology one comes out good, all right. But other than that, there's no other industry. No agriculture. Maybe some private industry, small business or what, you can create. But no more the diversity. You know, you don't have that. So it's going be difficult. I think going be real difficult. I foresee that it's gonna be difficult because the only industry is service industry. Service industry, plenty jobs. You like go clean house or water yard and all *da kine* stuff. Oh, get plenty jobs, but you don't need education for *da kine* job. So the guys that want education, where they going?

WN: How many of your kids live in Lahaina?

DR: I have one son (who lives on Maui). My daughter is in Los Angeles and my youngest son in Seattle, Washington. He works for Boeing.

WN: Do you think they're gonna come back here and live?

DR: No, not my daughter and my son. No, they'll never. It's a wasted opportunity over here. Where their kids' opportunity? Both of them get children. We get four grandchildren up there [Mainland]. So where's their future over here? No more. Yeah, I told them, "No more the future over here." Up there [Mainland] get, yeah, but not over here. That's the sad thing about it. That's the only thing I kind of worry about. But for us, we're retired already and we have nothing more to gain, it's good living. It's paradise to us. You get no worries, so it's good for us. But not for the young ones. Because they gotta work, they gotta earn money, they gotta look for their future and their kids' future and all that. It's different, very difficult.



WN: What about the mill? What do you think should be done about it?

DR: The mill. Well, they were talking about a possible museum, but I don't know. Yeah, they had a big fire just the other day. Sunday.

WN: Was it a big fire?

DR: Big fire, yeah. Really big fire. Homeless people go inside there to sleep, I think that's how they started it.

WN: People are saying make the mill into a shopping center or . . .

DR: Yeah, they were talking all about it. Yeah, preserving it. Some were saying museum and then shopping center, all kind of ideas, but I don't know.

WN: What about the smokestack?

DR: Well, they like to leave it as a historical monument or something.

WN: How do you feel about that?

DR: (Chuckles) Well, I don't know. Well, it's a good monument though, but I don't know.

WN: Some people feel real strongly that at least the mill, I mean the smokestack, should be kept. It's a beautiful smokestack.

DR: Yeah, yeah.

WN: I look up there and get, "Pioneer Mill . . ."

DR: Yeah, and the date of eighteen-something, anyway, I don't know. I have no idea. I mean it's a good thing to preserve it. But whether they going do it, I don't know. Because they say you gotta restructure it inside because the molding and stuff like that kind of giving way.

WN: Okay, I'm gonna turn off the recorder.

DR: Okay.

WN: Thank you very much.

DR: Yeah, you're welcome. I hope you can make a good report on your objective.

WN: Well, like I said, I'm going to type this out, and then when we're finished, your kids are gonna get copies if they want.

DR: Oh. (Chuckles) Nah, just give it to us and if we think we going give 'em, we give 'em.

(Laughter)

WN: Yeah. Okay. Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW



# **PIONEER MILL COMPANY:**

## **A Maui Sugar Plantation Legacy**

**Center for Oral History  
Social Science Research Institute  
University of Hawai'i at Mānoa**

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